demo

the hart house music magazine

march 2019 | issue 15

THE ART & FATHERHOOD OF SEAN LEON
PARTY MUSIC & HIP-HOP
HOW I FELL OUT OF LOVE WITH INDIE
6 PEOPLE AT EVERY TORONTO SHOW
AND MORE!

SEAN LEON

© Illustrations by Charmain Wong

COVERS: Botanical drawings courtesy of Paul Nelson & Missouri Department of Conservation
© Photos by Christian Fortino

Welcome to the Winter 2019 issue of *demo* magazine.

This edition of *demo* considers "new beginnings," with a particular focus on new artists who are just emerging onto the dynamic Canadian music scene. It seems oddly appropriate that such would be the focus of *demo* in a year – 2019 – when Hart House at the University of Toronto marks a century of providing students with the encouragement and the opportunity to pursue their artistic and recreational interests outside of the classroom. For ten decades, music has been one of most popular and accessible vehicles at Hart House through which people of all ages and stages of life – and representing almost as wide a range of musical tastes as there are people – have been able to feed their souls, restore their spirits, and experience community together.

For several years now, *demo* magazine has been written by student members of Hart House's Music Committee. On that Committee, a dedicated group of students regularly come together, across their differences, to ensure that music has pride of place at Hart House. Week in, month out, these students put on concerts, organize symposia, host industry guests, and generally ensure that students from all three campuses of the University of Toronto will always be able to indulge and evolve their shared love of music when they enter the doors of this very special centre for education outside the classroom. And those among their number who plan, design, publish and distribute *demo* are helping to carry on the great tradition of music journalism without which so many artists might never be discovered or heard.

And so, as you turn the pages of this very special edition of *demo*, I encourage you to say a silent "thank you" to those hard-working students whose devoted efforts to highlighting new and cutting-edge musical performers are helping to maintain and reinvigorate Hart House's century-long celebration of music itself.

Yours in the Rhythm of Life,

John Monahan
Hart House Warden

DEMO 15

Editors in Chief
Isaac Nikolai Fox
Anna Trikas

Online Editor
Charlie Jupp

Design Editor
Jennifer Wan

Contributers
Zain Ahmad
Emily Erhart
Mena Fouda
Vivian Li
Joey Litvak
Dani Mariam
Mathilde Molavi
Anisa Moquit
Keshav Sharma-Jaitly
Adam Smith

Graphic Designers
Daniel Lewycky
Andrea Macanović
Jordan McIntyre

Illustrators
Chuyi Deng
Sherry Liu
Kiki Teng
Charmain Wong

CONTENTS

staff letters cont'd 4

5 letters from the editors

6 an insider's guide to the toronto DIY scene

why A STAR IS BORN will literally always be relevant 8

10 a conversation with ROAM, toronto's future garage producer

video killed the radio stars - à qui le tour? 12

14 hardcore isn't that hostile

the art and fatherhood of SEAN LEON 16

21 "save a horse, ride the subway"

party music has always been the most progressive part of hip-hop 22

24 videogame composers: the unsung heros

how i fell out of love with indie 26

six unavoidable people you'll meet at every toronto scene 28

what are you listening to? 30

All content © 2019. *demo* Magazine. All rights reserved. Any use of the content of this publication without the express written permission of the publisher is strictly prohibited. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Some of the views expressed by contributors may not be the representative views of the publisher. All photographs, unless explicitly stated, are taken by *demo* contributers.

DEMO #15
letters from the staff, continued

Ely Lyonblum, PhD
Senior Advisor to the Music Committee

What does it take to create effective change for musicians in Toronto? How do we support new talent in our city? How do we hold space for artists and champion their gifts on the international stage? These are the key questions to reflect on as we consider new beginnings for our arts community.

Readers can support new musicians simply buy showing up. Don't just stream, albums buy them! Attend concerts and spread the word through social media. Check out new venues across the city and come with an open mind and open ears. Volunteer at arts festivals and bring your friends. While it may seem like a small contribution, this is the grassroots work that helps to educate young musicians that their hard work is valuable, and they deserve to be compensated accordingly for their time and efforts.

Artists and organizations often gather to consider what supports can be put in place to nurture and foster creativity amongst emerging artists. What is clear from these conversations is that in order to best serve the talents of musicians is to make substantial changes within our largest institutions. Our new beginning starts now.

The Hart House Music Committee holds the responsibility of representing one of the largest and best educational institutions in the country, and making our programming accessible to students and the public. To that end, we bring together students from across the University and showcases their talents alongside Toronto's best musicians and music researchers. This year we had the pleasure of hosting Jasmyn Burke from the band Weaves (featured in last year's *demo*) to discuss mentorship in music and the arts. We hosted open mics featuring everything from singer songwriters to tabla players, and welcomed the U of T Music and Memory Chapter and the Alzheimer Society of Toronto to learn more about their project to create personalized music playlists for Alzheimer's patients to enhance their cognitive abilities. This vibrant spirit of cultural and intellectual diversity is what I hope Vincent Massey envisioned when he conceived of Hart House 100 years ago.

It is my absolute pleasure as Senior advisor to the Music Committee to join Hart House in support of emerging artists and musicians, I look forward to all that is to come!

Marco Adamovic and Zoe Dille
Staff Advisors to the Music Committee

If you're reading this latest issue of *demo* chances are you consider yourself to be well informed and interested in arts and culture. For over 10 years now, *demo* magazine and *demo* online have provided insight into the connections between campus life, our local city and global influences in music. An array of students from various disciplines contribute to *demo* to make it a rich and informative read each year. This year is no different.

As Hart House approaches its 100th anniversary and gets set to remind students and community alike why a place like this is importance, why experiential education and personal development make for engaged citizens and creative artists *demo* brings you to the crossroads where student engagement, meets personal interest and creativity meets academic knowledge.

The Music committee, led by a group of engaged students continues to provide program such as Open Mic that we have become known for with other flavourful offerings such as the recent conversation led event featuring Jasmyn Burke of the Juno nominated group Weaves and Ely Lyonblum the committee's newest Senior Advisor.

The committee held 2 record sales to start the process of selling off its considerable vinyl collection and is supporting an initiative to create an exciting new Hip Hop Scholar in Residence program for the future.

As staff advisors, we are there to support, cajole, foster curiosity and facilitate program ideas and activities from students and to see that their creativity and enthusiasm can flourish. We're surprised and encouraged by the results and point to *demo* as one of the brightest examples of student dedication, creativity and hard work.

Congratulations on another issue and on keeping the artist flames burning brightly at Hart House.

letters from the masthead

Isaac Nikolai Fox
Co-Editor in Chief

I came across *demo* Magazine entirely by accident. It was summer 2016, I was working a dead-end job tracking down non-respondents for the Federal Census, and my older sister told me that since I liked music and talking to total strangers so much, I needed to combine the two and start interviewing musicians. This was sage advice. A few days after sliding into *demo*'s DMs, I had my first interview and haven't looked back since.

demo is a completely unique community and platform. Being part of *demo* has empowered me to reach out to creatives from all walks of life, to affirm that their voices are valued and important, and to ask them to chat over coffee. The answer's always yes. As an editor, *demo* has allowed me to share that love for conversation and music with others, and to support them in developing their talents as writers and interviewers. But more than anything, being part of *demo* has made me feel at home in Toronto. That's really worth something, and I hope the magazine will have a similar impact on others for many years to come.

With this fifteenth print issue, we've aimed to include a balanced mix of hard-hitting analyses, subgenre guides, personal essays, irreverent lists and of course, interviews. Our writers have focused on the local and the DIY, and our editorial team couldn't be any more proud of what they've achieved. A big thank you to everyone who contributed in any way, shape, or form – we could not have done it without you.

Anna Trikas
Co-Editor in Chief

This issue of *demo* tells the story of many new and emerging musicians in the Toronto music scene. From Sean Leon's recount of his early days as an artist to Joey Litvak's step-by-step guide to starting off your own band, the *demo* writers have covered everything.

However, for some of us, this issue signifies an end. Both Isaac and I are finishing our final semester at UofT, and though excited for what's to come, I am reluctant to leave *demo* behind. I have been a member of *demo* since frosh week of my first year, and have thoroughly enjoyed being part of such enthusiastic and committed community of writers and editors. Truthfully, the number of students who are so willing to devote their free time to create this magazine and foster this community is both astonishing and inspiring. I am forever grateful that I have had the opportunity to learn from the editors before me, as well as from Isaac, Charlie and Jennifer. Being a part of *demo* has given me the chance to improve and develop editing and writing skills through this unique mode of peer mentoring.

Though this will be the last *demo* edition I'll be part of producing, I have no intention of leaving the community behind. The people I have met through this club are ambitious, friendly, and unforgettable. I am excited and confident that Charlie, Zain, and Mena will do an excellent job next year as *demo*'s incoming executive, and I look forward to reading the 2020 edition of the magazine.

Again, I want to thank everyone who has been a part of *demo* this year. It has been such a pleasure working with all of you this year!

Charlie Jupp
Online Editor

Being a part of the *demo* team has been such a privilege this year. Anna introduced me to the publication my second year at university, and I am very thankful she did so. Both Anna and Isaac have taught me so much about what it means to be involved on campus and to lead a team, and to them I am so grateful.

They have done a really wonderful job on this year's issue. We have a fantastic cover interview with a great Toronto musician, wonderful contributors who wrote about a great variety of subjects and genres, and a stunning design. I have learned so much from working with these people and on the online portion of the magazine.

Speaking of online, Anna and Isaac put huge effort into redoing the website. I saw how much work they put into it and how many man-hours it took to make it look incredible and professional. Both the print and the online versions of *demo* are publications we should all be very proud to put our names on. Our whole team next year has big shoes to fill.

Jennifer Wan
Design Editor

Managing my time at U of T has been a huge challenge for me in the past year. Taking the maximum number of courses, pulling all-nighters for studios, and getting involved in all these clubs... As stressful as it was, in no way do I regret joining the *demo* team this year to be part of bringing you this fresh fruit of our labour.

I met Yasmeen, our design editor last year, before first year at a U of T open house and was pleasantly surprised by her friendliness and her love for UofT. I am especially thankful for her because she strengthened my decision to come to this school and introduced me to *demo*!

Other than pure design work, this year's experience at *demo* allowed me to meet wonderful new people, work with an amazing team, reignite my interest in new music, and even discover Mitski (sorry I'm so late). In my opinion, *demo* is not only a student-run magazine, it is a community that connects musicians and listeners alike in an open and inviting environment. It is my hope that this year's print edition will also bring that community and openness to you as well.

An Insider's Guide to the Toronto DIY Scene

by Joey Litvak

From Rock and Roll Hall of Famers like Rush, to indie staples like Broken Social Scene, and international superstars like Drake, Toronto has truly made a name for itself as one of the most distinguished music cities in the world. I was first introduced to this world as a young attendee of "North by Northeast" in the summer of 2014. The five-day festival took me on a wild-goose chase around the city to catch performances from big names and local acts in a variety of bars, clubs, and unconventional outdoor spaces -- and it was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. I remember traveling across the city in a streetcar turned music venue soundtracked by Frankie Cosmos, stumbling across an elbow-to-elbow house party/backyard BBQ featuring surprise guest KC Accidental, and waking up bleary-eyed after a string of late night shows to make it to an early morning pizza party hosted by Macaulay Culkin's band, The Pizza Underground. Toronto was bursting with creative energy, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of it.

Like many wannabe musicians, I taught myself to play guitar and started to write music, but quickly realized that I didn't know how to *actually* get involved in Toronto's DIY music scene. There are hundreds of emerging musicians in Toronto in the same position, who are passionate about their craft but are missing the knowledge they need to start booking local shows and building their fanbases. So I caught up with one of the local bands I look up to the most: Glass Cactus. Formed in 2013, the indie-alternative-punk band – comprised of Aidan Fine, Ezra Sherman, Dave Zimmer, Kai DeDonato, and Kabir Malik – has quickly become a fixture of the Toronto scene, performing in various classic DIY venues across the city including Lee's Palace, Sneaky Dee's, The Rivoli, The Hard Luck, and The Horseshoe. This is their inside perspective on how to take your music from the bedroom to your local scene.

Make Connections

Kai: Once you've got a few tunes down, it's a good idea to go out and see some shows in the scene that you'd like to get into. It's a great way to make contacts and meet people with the same interests.

Aidan: Find three or four people who are on the same page as you. Working with other people is a great way to get involved and get your creative juices flowing.

Play as much as Possible

Kai: It can be hard to stay motivated when there are a lot of shows where people don't show up. But no matter what your audience is like or how you feel on stage, you gotta give it your all. Even if nobody is there, that becomes a great opportunity to practice for when there will be.

Ezra: It can be really hard to make people take your band seriously sometimes, but you have to remember that every band starts off with a fan base of zero.

Dave: If you're a Toronto artist or band that only plays in the city, you're really limiting the amount of people that can see you perform. To build buzz you need to expand your market. Go to Hamilton, go to Kingston, go to London. University towns are huge for the DIY scene.

Don't Be Afraid to Get Wild on Stage

Dave: You just want to find a way to keep people engaged and entertained the whole time. Even if your music is amazing, people can still get bored.

Ezra: The spaces in between songs are really useful for setting yourself apart from other musicians. We always ask ourselves, "what can we do on stage that's never been done before?" We like to do comedy bits to transition from song to song, and there was one show where we brought audience members up onto the stage to play carnival games with us.

Keep Production DIY – and Use Streaming Services!

Kai: Read as much as you can, watch tutorials on Youtube, and really practice what you learn. As a DIY musician, Google is your best friend.

Ezra:There are distribution services that will put your music on a ton of streaming platforms. DistroKid is a really good one to know. Spotify is also introducing a new feature that will allow musicians to directly upload their music onto the service without going through a third party. Bandcamp is great, too – they give you 100% of the money you earn!

Social Media is Essential

Ezra: In the last ten years alone, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have really become embedded into our society. In 2008, bands like Vampire Weekend didn't need to think about Instagram posts or Snapchat accounts. As a musician today, it's really important to have a brand that people can instantly connect with, and social media is the best way to form that relationship with an audience.

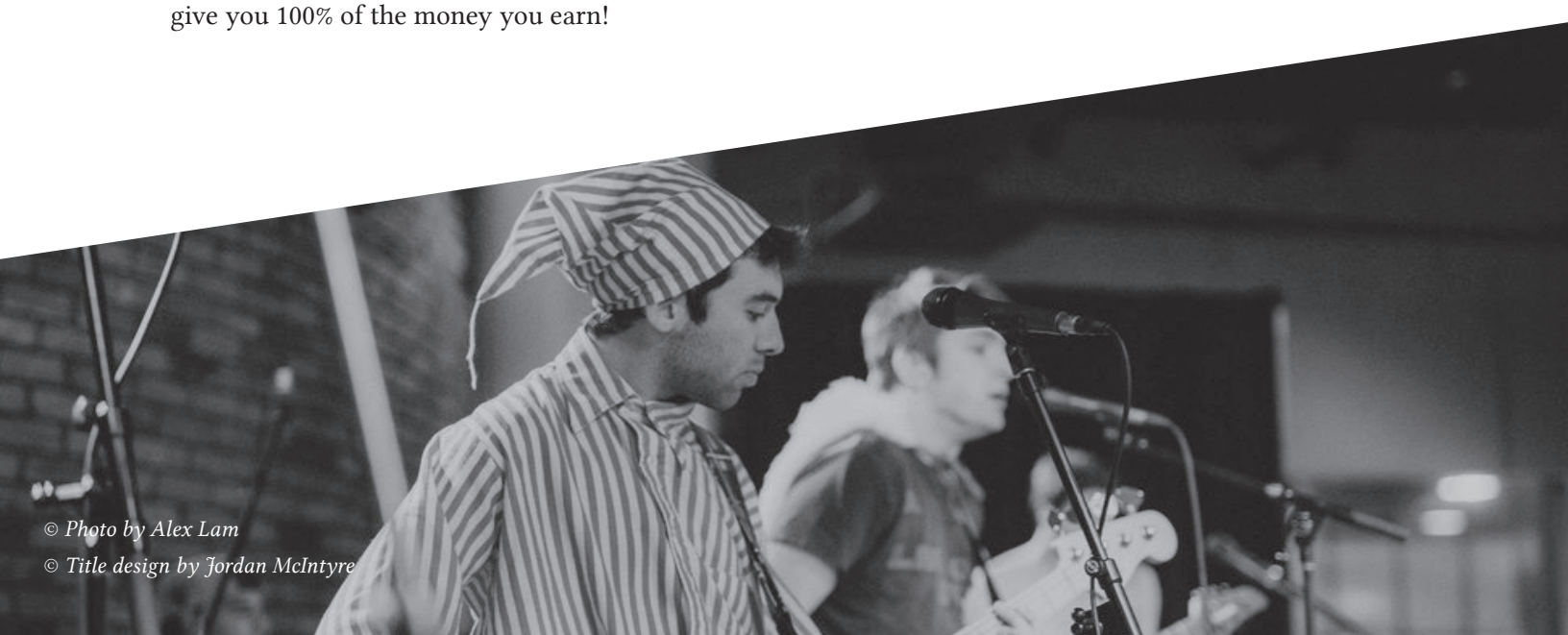
Kai: Social media is also a way to send your show home with the audience. At the end of the day, it's always about finding ways to entertain the viewer.

Aidan: In terms of getting your music heard, the best thing is word of mouth. Ask every friend you have to share your music on Facebook or other social media sites, because then your music is reaching out to so many different social circles.

Access Every Grant You Can

Ezra: It's a very well-kept secret that the music industry in Canada is flushed with cash – you just have to know where to apply for it.

Dave: There are a lot of grants that financially support emerging artists from the Ontario Arts Council and The Canada Council for the Arts. Factor is a good one to look into for low-key projects, as well.



© Photo by Alex Lam
© Title design by Jordan McIntyre

Why A STAR IS BORN will literally always be relevant

BY ZAIN AHMAD

"The film truly speaks to the #MeToo era in its depiction of toxic masculinity."

A Star Is Born is a tale that's been told many times: a weary male celebrity addled with addiction discovers a young and talented female struggling to make it in the entertainment industry. He immediately becomes enamoured with her and takes her under his wing, helping to launch her career. But as her star begins to rise, he finds himself eclipsed by her success and spirals out towards a tragic death after his patronage loses its power.

There's something universal about the relationship between the two characters at the core of each film – the juxtaposition of a rising star with a dying one – that has been just as compelling in each one of its many adaptations. It's a Shakespearean tragedy set within a truly American context: glitzy, glamourous showbiz.

The plot behind *A Star Is Born* was drawn from *What Price Hollywood?*, a 1932 film whose tragic arc was inspired by two real-life events that occurred just before its production. The first was the divorce of actress Colleen Moore and her older husband John McCormick – a producer struggling with alcoholism – while the second was as well as the death of Tom Forman, a director who died from suicide following a nervous breakdown. The self-destruction of once-powerful men like McCormick and Forman was a powerful inspiration, and would remain a constant throughout all the subsequent adaptations.

Only five years after *What Price Hollywood?* made it to the big screen, director William A. Wellman released the original *A Star Is Born*, starring Janet Gaynor and Fredric March. Minus some minor changes in character names, Wellman's picture drew almost entirely on the plot of its inspiration and was a smash success, earning seven Academy Award nominations. It didn't take long for the first remake to appear, either.

In 1954, *A Star Is Born* was adapted into a musical starring Judy Garland and James Mason, and was again a massive blockbuster. Another twenty years or so passed before the next remake – this time, it was a Barbara Streisand production that focused on the music industry rather than the film industry. The ending was similar, although the male protagonist dies in a drunk driving accident rather than suicide. The point remains: no matter the decade, no matter the adaptation, the central dynamic at the heart of *A Star Is Born* has stayed essentially the same.

Although the latest version is no different in its basic plot structure, it is by far the most nuanced of the five iterations. Directed by and starring Bradley Cooper alongside Lady Gaga, the 2018 adaptation uses the relationship between the two main characters – Jackson and Ally – to powerfully

© Photo by Daniel Lewycky

"Bradley Cooper manages to comment on both the state of the music industry right now as well as the gender roles at play within it."

critique toxic masculinity. Cooper also centers the gendered conflict between his protagonists around artistic authenticity, whereas past iterations have relied upon the male protagonist being emasculated by the female's success to drive the story's conflict and the lead's ultimate downfall.

By framing the film's central conflict through this lens, Cooper comments on both the current state of the music industry and the gendered power dynamics at play within it. The unqualified stance that rock music is deeper and more artistically pure than pop music is a common one within the music industry, although it is worthwhile to note that these attitudes are slowly eroding.

"The notion that pop music has nothing to say is inherently sexist"

Jackson roots for Ally, recognizes her true potential and genuinely wants her to succeed. It's not machismo that pulls him into a downward spiral, it's his deep-rooted struggles with addiction. His spiral only deepens when he thinks that Ally has betrayed herself and sold out to the industry, and it is here that the true antagonist in Jackson's eyes emerges: pop music itself.

When they first meet, Ally and Jackson bond over the folksy, guitar-driven music he favors. The first song that they write and sing together, "Shallow," perfectly embodies what Jackson wants from life: authenticity. Singing lyrics like "scratch through the surface/where they can't hurt us/we're far from the shallow now," Jackson expresses that the talent he sees in Ally comes from her outsider purity as well as her vocal abilities.

He sees that raw authenticity as an antidote to the pop music dominating the charts at that moment in time, which is nothing but shallow to him. So when Ally becomes a pop star on the back of songs with lyrics like "why do you look so good in those jeans, why'd you come around me with an ass like that," Jackson takes it as a personal betrayal. In his eyes, once Ally starts making the pop music he sees as so inauthentic, she has lost who she truly is no matter how successful she becomes.

Ally has an uphill battle against that perception throughout the film. She does everything on her own terms and retains her autonomy, but still struggles against structural sexism that devalues her art for its sexual content. Jackson himself thinks that her new direction comes from falling victim to the music industry and losing the authenticity that made her so great to begin with. This is deeply ironic, since other than dyeing her hair orange, Ally hasn't really changed in any way since she was first discovered.

Towards the end of the film, Sam Elliott's Bobby tells Ally that "music is essentially twelve notes between any octave. Twelve notes, and the octave repeats. It's the same story, told over and over, forever – all any artist can offer the world i=s how they see those 12 notes." It's a subtle nod to all the versions of *A Star Is Born* that came before it, and those that will inevitably come after. While the names, faces, industries, and eras may change, the enduring truth about behind A Star Is Born will remain a timeless tragedy.

A CONVERSATION WITH ROAM, TORONTO'S FUTURE GARAGE PRODUCER

BY ADAM SMITH

Roam is a storyteller.

His dark, icy productions are meticulously crafted to narrate stories of his past, from tumultuous relationships to his own struggles with mental health. Through tight UK garage and trap drums, sombre strings, and haunting vocal samples, Roam creates immersive soundscapes designed to inspire heavy introspection while never straying too far from his signature dance grooves. He got his musical start producing in the explosive Toronto hip-hop scene, but has recently pivoted towards a solo career. In 2018, he released his first full length album, *Remnants*, a future-IDM project documenting pivotal moments in his past relationships. He's since followed it up with *Depths* – an EP he wrote several years prior, following a particularly difficult confrontation with his depression.

We met on a cold January afternoon at Cloak and Dagger, a dimly lit downtown bar, where he opened up to me about his music and his life. In conversation, one gets the sense that he knows exactly what every note and tone means to him. As he jokes about clout chasers and not really knowing who Burial is, his intimate connection with his music perpetually leads the discussion, as if he's been bursting to share his process with somebody. Electronic and dance music have been pigeonholed as overly simplistic, but Roam's tracks are fully three-dimensional. They're his life in instrumental form, and there's purpose and intent behind every section.

UK and Future Garage are not the most common sounds in Toronto – tell me about how you found your home in those genres.

It started when I discovered some of the more dark electronic music channels, and they had a lot of the future garage stuff that spoke to me on a personal level. At the time, I was going through a really dark time. I was dealing with depression and anxiety, and that music spoke to me because it reflected how I was feeling. So I did what most people do when an art form speaks to you: I tried to recreate it. I brought my laptop to a laundromat, and wrote the bassline and string section in "Taker." It all just clicked, and I've been running with that sound ever since.

You pitch, shift, and distort your samples heavily to create certain textures. How important to you are lyrics and original source of vocals when choosing samples?

I'm really huge on lyrical songwriting. It's important to me, and I think it's becoming more important in general. If you look at someone like Mitski, who's blown up recently, she's a brilliant lyricist and is able to convey deep and powerful emotions in way that's not cliché. With me, I'm extremely picky about what I'm going to take out of a song and throw on top of mine. Firstly, the tone and the imagery that I get from that original lyric has to resonate deeply with me as a person. It has to be something that I've felt deeply as a result of an experience. Secondly, it has to fit the atmosphere, the ambience, and the almost cinematic feel that I'm trying to build with the music part.

And maybe as a result, you're kind of a black sheep within the Toronto scene – at least sonically. Teddy Fantum, a long time collaborator of yours, says he doesn't associate with the so-called Toronto Sound. What do you make of that label?

The Toronto sound has become so clichéd. It's kind of ridiculous how you know exactly what that means when somebody says it. When someone describes the "Toronto sound," they just mean fat, dark synth bass, loud claps and snares, distorted 808s, that whole WondaGurl, Eestbound style. It's just a box, and even if that's not your sound you still have to break out of that expectation when people know you're from here.

Plus, if you're trying to work as a producer behind-the-scenes and not as your own artist, there's extra pressure to conform to the dominant sound.

Exactly. It's extremely limiting, and I think it's a trap that many producers fall into. If you're producing hip-hop, your career is dependent upon whether an artist uses your material. That process of making beats, writing music, and using your passion to fuel creative expression can get drowned out when you have to hand your work over to someone who may not like it, or who may just ignore it. Now that I'm doing my own artistic thing, I don't need to conform. Writing for yourself is less draining of a process than sitting at home, making ten beats in a day, and hoping that at least five of them end up being good enough to send out. That's not even the end of the process – you have to bring them to a studio to see if any of them gets picked up, and it might take months before anything is released. It's a lot less stressful when you can say to yourself, "Well, nothing's hitting with these guys, so I'll just make my own stuff."

On Twitter, you've also been very outspoken about the effects of toxic masculinity and sexual harassment within Toronto's music scene – and how abusers are continuing to thrive. Have you found that attitude limits who your collaborators are?

I've never been held back – the people that I collaborate with are pretty much on the same page. And if I ever did feel restrained by certain people, it probably means that I shouldn't be working them with anyways. I don't even talk to people who do that kind of stuff, but there's a lot of it going on. It's super toxic. The Toronto scene is not a healthy place for women, and the least I can do, the bare minimum, is to be open about what I see. Call it out, call it how I see it, and make sure I'm not empowering abusers in the scene in any way, to the best of my ability.

*©photo from instagram.com/thewraith_*

VIDEO KILLED THE RADIO STARS —À QUI LE TOUR?

BY MATHILDE MOLAVI

Difficile aujourd'hui de faire la différence entre le métier de musicien et celui de producteur. Se lancer dans l'aventure de la composition, pour beaucoup, cela signifie principalement se frotter aux tutoriels FruitLoops sur YouTube. Diffuser son travail, c'est une tournée, un festival, mais c'est surtout un lien SoundCloud.

Cela fait maintenant des décennies que les avancées technologiques transforment nos façons de faire et d'écouter de la musique, et à chaque pas, des métiers ont disparu au sein de l'industrie. Prédire l'avenir est une science loin d'être exacte, mais à l'heure où certains d'entre nous considèrent une carrière dans la musique, il peut être utile de se demander quelles seront les prochaines victimes.

D'abord, la radio. Elle a d'abord pris un coup par l'immédiateté du contact visuel offert par la télévision – on pense au révolutionnaire Ed Sullivan Show. Aujourd'hui, de plus en plus de personnes se détournent de ce média en raison du manque de diversité des programmations. Il faut dire que les plateformes de streaming ont permis à notre génération de développer un goût musical bien plus pointu, sous des influences transcendant les genres et les époques. Inutile de s'interroger alors sur le succès des webradios qui, ultra spécialisées, permettent d'approfondir sa connaissance d'un nouveau genre obscur, ou alors simplement d'allonger sa playlist Spotify. J'écris d'ailleurs ces quelques mots au son d'un live NTS ; et j'imagine qu'il y a actuellement au moins une personne à Robarts sur Youtube en train d'écouter lofi hip hop radio - beats to relax/study to. Les radios traditionnelles ont donc grandement intérêt à renouveler leur modèle, au risque de disparaître : oui, on a tous adoré ce tube d'Ariana Grande, non, on ne veut pas pour autant l'écouter cinq fois par heure.

Cette même diversification du goût musical ainsi que le brouillage des genres rend une autre tâche bien plus complexe : celle du critique musical. Si auparavant, il était possible de se spécialiser dans un genre particulier et de comparer un artiste à l'ensemble d'un courant dans lequel il s'inscrit, cela semble complètement aberrant à l'heure actuelle.

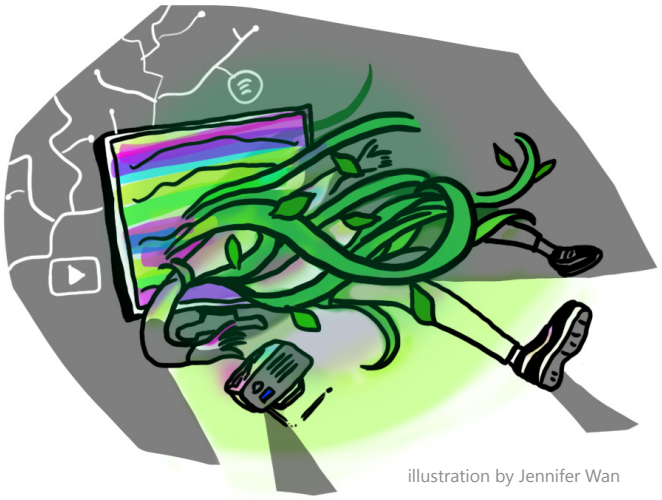


illustration by Jennifer Wan

Même si ce problème est plus ou moins bien contourné par l'explosion du nombre de genres musicaux, ce ne sont plus les critiques, ni les dirigeants de labels, qui décident de ce que nous allons écouter. Les algorithmes analysant nos playlists font un bien meilleur travail, et pour cause : leurs suggestions se fondent sur l'analyse du rythme et de la tonalité de ce que nous aimons habituellement. Par ailleurs, il est maintenant possible de détecter le prochain artiste qui va exploser en analysant les vues de sa page Wikipedia ou de sa chaîne YouTube. Il est aisé de concevoir que la science fasse un meilleur travail que l'instinct d'un vieux monsieur dans une maison de disques.

Ce monsieur des maisons de disques voit son travail mis en danger non seulement par les plateformes de diffusion actuelles, mais aussi par ce qui nous est présenté comme la prochaine révolution technologique: la blockchain. Ces bases de données hautement sécurisées, partagées entre leurs utilisateurs, pourrait permettre bientôt de supprimer tous les intermédiaires entre les artistes et leur audience (c'est notamment le pari de la compagnie SingularDTV, et Spotify a d'ores et déjà investi dans la bloc. La rémunération liée au droit d'auteur pourrait s'en trouver améliorée : imaginons que les sociétés de droit d'auteur disparaissent et que leurs frais de gestion se retrouvent dans la poche des artistes ?

Est-ce que cela signifie que les évolutions de l'industrie musicale se ferait certes au détriment de certains métiers, mais au profit des artistes ? A vrai dire, il est possible que la science fasse bientôt un meilleur travail que n'importe quel musicien. Les intelligences artificielles sont déjà capables de produire des mélodies : elles ne sont pas agréables à écouter pour le moment, mais elles progressent à toute vitesse. Si on revient à ce que font déjà nos algorithmes de suggestion susmentionnés, on peut facilement se mettre à rêver à un ordinateur qui écouterait nos chansons préférées et qui s'en inspirerait pour créer quelque chose dans la même veine. Mais enfin, si on se lance sur ce chemin, on arrive vite à la conclusion que l'humain ne va plus servir à grand-chose. Faites ce que vous voulez de vos carrières, les amis.

HARDCORE ISN'T THAT HOSTILE

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Faith / Void

By Anisa Moquit

What's a shy, 5 foot-zero brown girl from Bangladesh like me doing at a show like this?

When you think of punk, you might think of heavily tatted skinheads, underfed white guys, leather-clad macho men, or some combination of all three. To an outsider, that doesn't necessarily sound friendly. However, this perception is not entirely true. While I'll be the first to admit that hardcore punk and its many offshoots (like skramz, power violence, d-beat or crust) don't seem welcoming on the surface, this has never been my experience with the genre.

When I first stepped foot in Canada two and a half years ago, I felt completely overwhelmed. It's hard to think of a new country as your home, even for the short duration of an undergraduate degree. The weather, transportation system, and the cultural references I didn't understand all made me feel like the only way I'd be at ease was through total assimilation into the dominant cultural. But my encounters with the hardcore community have taught me that finding my place doesn't mean I have to change myself. As someone who is often nervous in new spaces, there's something awe-inspiring about being around people who are unapologetically themselves, like those in the punk community.

If going to a hardcore show is something you want to explore, but the anxiety of being crammed in an unfamiliar venue with strangers that look bigger, meaner, and tougher than you is making you hesitate, I'd recommend you just go for it anyways. Hardcore sets are usually only ten minutes or so per band, but those ten minutes will completely uninhibit you. It's not just the skills (or sometimes lack thereof) of the musicians, or the socio-politically charged content of the lyrics; it's the fearless, contagious self-expression presented in each set that will create an accepting, non judgemental space. Band members will mosh with the crowd, unfazed by flying beer bottles and bodies. This friendly atmosphere establishes is a surprising bonus – after a ferocious set, your sweaty neighborhood punks will always wish you a safe trip home.

Faith/Void, my favorite hardcore venue, embodied the exact dichotomy described: it appeared intimidating, but was actually incredibly welcoming. Named after the split of DC hardcore bands Void and The Faith that shaped the sound of modern hardcore, F/V was located just north of Trinity-Bellwoods until it sadly closed down earlier this year. It was a basement venue and record store, one that could easily be missed or overlooked by those who weren't "in-the-know." But once you found your way in, you'd find that owner/S.H.I.T lead singer Ryan Tong's space epitomized the best tenets of hardcore music: the DIY spirit, radical inclusivity, and resistance to commercialization. Faith/Void was a subversive space that showcased both local and international records, as well as classic hardcore rarities. It felt like home.

It's no exaggeration to say that independent venues like Faith/Void are endangered. Gentrification, restrictive city bylaws, and insane rent prices are all factors which make it hard for Toronto's hardcore venues to survive. Vegan café slash all-ages emo venue D-Beatstro recently closed down last year, after management realized that previous owners had failed for years to apply for building permits, leaving them on the hook for all the necessary repairs. Faith/Void shut down for similarly mundane reasons; noise complaints from snooty neighbours combined with rising rent prices were the deciding blows. It is important to remember that losing such spaces doesn't simply mean we are losing outlets for live art and expression. When venues shut down, we lose valuable community spaces, and the artists lose important opportunities to connect with the people whose passion sustains their careers. And the scene's worse off for it.

THROUGH MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE PUNK SCENE, I HAVE LEARNED TO CHANNEL THE ENERGY BANDS PERFORM WITH AND FINALLY FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH BEING ME.

It's cliche to say, but I can't help but repeat the phrase "DIY will never die." Shortly before Faith/Void closed for good, the owner Ryan told me that the it's the people that make the scene, not the venues. And despite some venue closures, the people who are passionate about hardcore haven't gone anywhere. If you add a couple of promoters on Facebook, you'll have no trouble finding hardcore pop-up shows, even though the venues can be unorthodox. Trapdoor Fest, New Friends DIY, and Not Dead Yet are all good places for new punks to start. Other shows are "ask-a-punk," which usually means they're in band members' basements, and you have to directly message someone for the address. Occasionally, there are "bridge shows," which are exactly what they sound like: shows under an actual bridge. I almost got frostbite at the last one.

Through my involvement in the punk scene, I have learned to channel the energy bands perform with and finally feel comfortable with being me. So if you find yourself wondering what to do on a Friday or Saturday night, I recommend going to a show and seeing if hardcore is your thing. I never imagined it would be mine, but thanks to the welcoming environment of Faith/Void, I found my space – not just in the hardcore scene, but in my new country.

© Photo by Christian Fortino
© Botanical drawing courtesy of Paul Nelson / MDC

LEON

THE IXXI FRONTMAN ON SURVIVING AND THRIVING IN PARKDALE

THE ART AND FATHERHOOD OF SEAN LEON

BY ISAAC NIKOLAI FOX

Sean Leon is tough to pin down.

Before all else, he's a father. The twenty-eight year-old rapper and his partner – poet Tania Peralta – had their daughter just over four years ago, when Ajax-born Leon was still a newcomer to the Toronto music scene. Prior to her birth, he had already self-released a slew of projects that showcased his confessional and genre-bending approach to hip-hop. Most notable of these are 2014's *King of the Wild Things* and *Narcissus, The Drowning of Ego*. His sonic trademarks – heavily enunciated, chopped-and-screwed vocals and hard-hitting, detuned instrumentals – were fully developed, and formed the basis of early career standout tracks "Pretty Girls Put Boys In Cemeteries" and "Mauivelli." But the raw urgency of young fatherhood and the pressure to provide at all costs shook that foundation to its core, and fundamentally reshaped his life, identity and artistry.

This meant that Leon had to grow up fast, and that he couldn't afford for his pursuit of a music career to end up a mere pipe dream. It meant that his work took a turn for the darker, as he "plotted on his opposition" over trunk-rattling, 808-saturated production from his close collaborators, being Wondagurl, Eestbound and Bijan Amir. It meant couch-surfing, drifting from place to place with Peralta before their family settled in the Parkdale basement that would become the nucleus of their family life and his career: Maison Maui. "For the longest time, our family was in that Parkdale basement. And the times when we were living there were some of the most challenging we've ever faced. I was learning what it actually meant to be a provider, and how to balance that with making music for a living. Living up to that responsibility took a lot – even when I was working my hardest there were times when I felt underwater, like I was drowning alive."

He's not in that space anymore, though – neither mentally nor physically. Leon's family left their Parkdale basement last year after opening their photo and writing-covered walls up to the general public as a museum, and they emerged from years of uncertainty into fresh stability. This newfound peace-of-mind has carried over into much of his latest work. The tension and frantic energy latent in his previous music dissipated in last year's *The Death Of... (Sean Leon)*, a thirty-two minute project that Leon initially released as a single, unbroken track. On segments like the languid, Harrison-produced "Bank Account" and the bright lead single "90BPM," Leon lets the bright instrumentation breathe, injecting his confident, ethereal vocals only when necessary. The tonal change isn't just in the instrumentation and his delivery, but also in his lyrics, which reflect his newfound security.

"I get by just by myself, write a cheque and sign myself,
I would say life is like an episode of Seinfeld,
but that would show my age and the youth are in a rage."

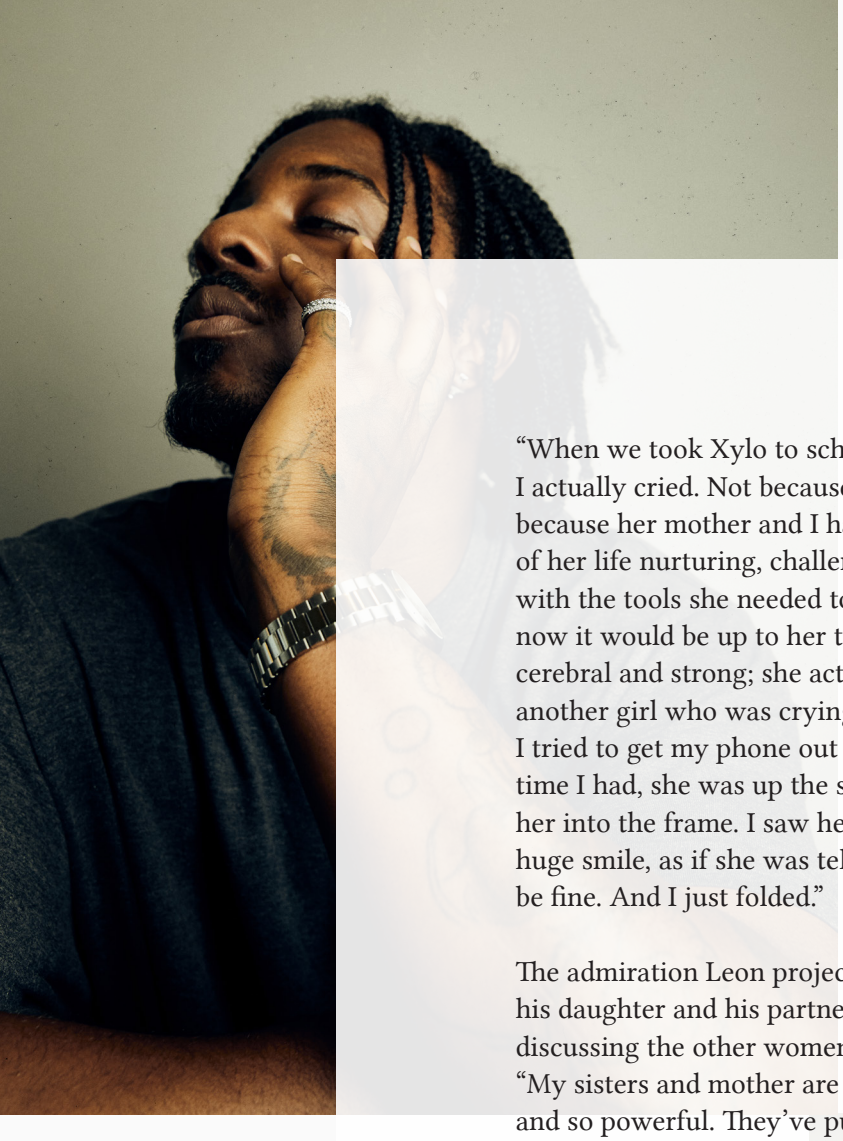
"*The Death Of... (Sean Leon)* was the death of that chapter of my life, the death of that lack of stability and of being purely underground. Artists talk a lot about coming up out of the basement, but that was my family's reality for years, and we made it past that." As he explains to me, the challenge isn't survival now, but ascension and expansion. There's only room for his family and close collaborators to come along with him during this next phase of his career. However, despite this growing confidence, Leon still remains sensitive to how his records are received. Earlier in the year, he understandably expressed shock that none of his last three albums had received Juno nominations. Throughout our conversation, he was frank about the sense of exhaustion that always accompanies his album releases.

"The closest thing I can relate it to is post-partum depression; after I put something into the world, that body of work is done and fully-formed and it's not just a part of me. It's the feeling that I've had this baby with me for the longest time, and now that it's outside me I can only shape its impact – it doesn't fully belong to me anymore"

© Photo by Christian Fortino

"When I put out a record, it feels almost suicidal – not that I'd ever take my own life, but giving that piece of me to the world to be picked apart always brings me to a deep, low place, especially at first. The closest thing I can relate it to is post-partum depression - after I put something into the world, that body of work is done and fully-formed, and it's not just a part of me. It's the feeling that I've had this baby with me for the longest time, and now that it's outside me I can only shape its impact – it doesn't fully belong to me anymore. And it's not just the music. At times, that's how I feel about my daughter growing up."

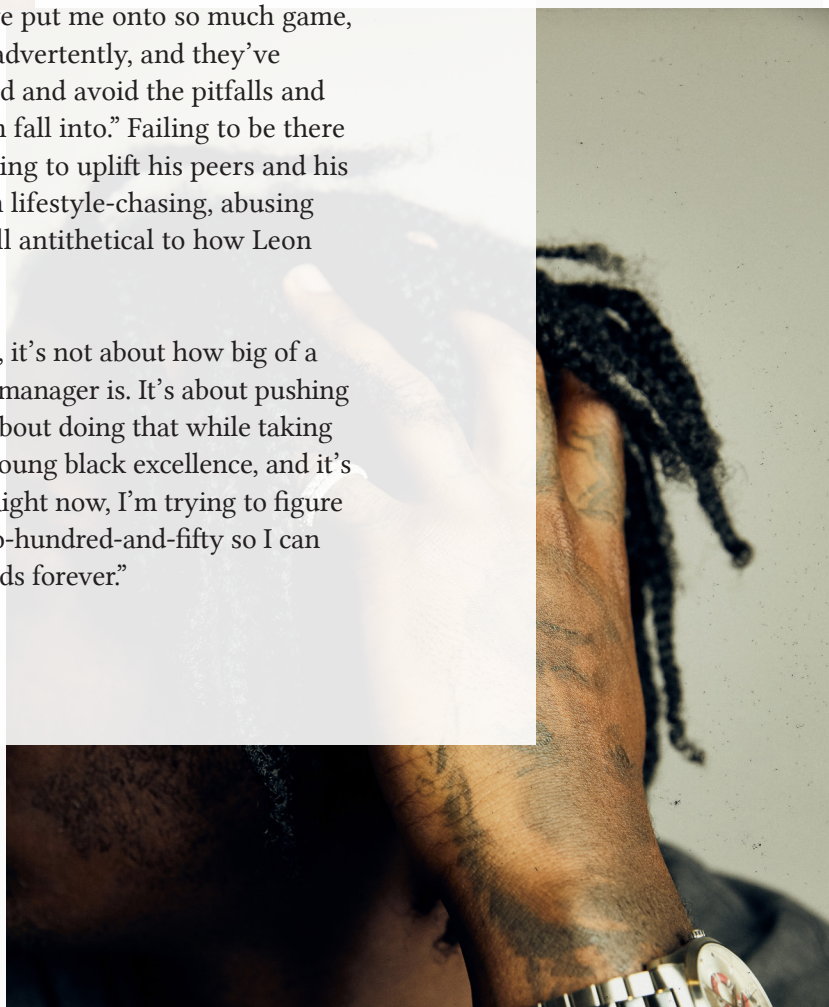
And there it is. Within the span of a second, the discussion about Leon's art has pivoted back to the other driving force in his life: fatherhood. His daughter Xylo is still young, but she is years past infancy now and starting to discover the world by herself, on her own terms. Though all children inevitably grow up, this process can be hard for parents to come to terms with, and letting go can evoke conflicting feelings of pride and loss. Leon is no stranger to this aspect of parenthood. For him, it was dropping Xylo off at kindergarten for the first time that brought him back to the headspace he always ends up in when writing his most personal records.



"When we took Xylo to school for the first time, I actually cried. Not because she was crying, but because her mother and I had spent the first years of her life nurturing, challenging, and equipping her with the tools she needed to live in this world, and now it would be up to her to use them. She was so cerebral and strong; she actually held the hand of another girl who was crying because she was scared. I tried to get my phone out to film her, but by the time I had, she was up the steps and I couldn't get her into the frame. I saw her look back quickly with a huge smile, as if she was telling me everything would be fine. And I just folded."

The admiration Leon projects when talking about his daughter and his partner is just as present when discussing the other women in his immediate family. "My sisters and mother are so emotionally intelligent, and so powerful. They've put me onto so much game, both on purpose and inadvertently, and they've helped me stay grounded and avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that many men fall into." Failing to be there for one's family, neglecting to uplift his peers and his community, engaging in lifestyle-chasing, abusing others' trust – they're all antithetical to how Leon moves through life.

"It's not about a lifestyle, it's not about how big of a chain I have or who my manager is. It's about pushing artistic boundaries, it's about doing that while taking care of Xylo, it's about young black excellence, and it's about leaving a legacy. Right now, I'm trying to figure out how I can live to two-hundred-and-fifty so I can keep making these records forever."



© Photos by Christian Fortino

"Save a Horse, Ride the Subway"

EMILY ERHART

To me, home is sitting in the passenger seat of my best friend's truck while country music blares on the radio. Despite this, I've never understood the infatuation with the genre that so many of my peers in my hometown of Lindsay, Ontario adore. Perhaps that's a part of why I initially gravitated to the city, and chose to attend Canada's largest university. One of the most interesting differences I've noticed between Lindsay and Toronto is the music that encompasses these spaces. After thinking about this, I have concluded that there are three main factors which contribute to this difference in music preference: transportation, venues and diversity.

Transportation dictates a big part of daily life. In Lindsay, there is no TTC, no Go Transit, and definitely no walking or biking. This means you need to drive everywhere, and when you're driving, you're listening to the radio – a major difference from Toronto, where public transit is the main mode of travel. When I take the subway, I immediately put in my earphones and turn on Spotify, as many others around me do. In Lindsay, where music is played out loud through car radios, listeners are less inclined to discover music through services like Spotify as music is discovered simply through word-of-mouth, and by listening to the radio while driving. Ultimately, this leads to a lack of diversity in what gets discovered and listened to.

In addition to differing modes of transportation, venues also contribute to Lindsay's unchanging inclination towards country music. In Toronto, there are a plethora of places willing to showcase artists performing a variety of genres of music. From Jazz at the Rex, to local indie artists at the Horseshoe Tavern, to sold out stadium shows at the Scotiabank Arena, there's something for everyone. In Lindsay, the opposite is true. For example, when I went back last summer, my friends and I decided to go out to one of the few bars in Lindsay. The only live music there happened to be our own group's karaoke performance of Smash Mouth's "All Star," after three John Cash songs were performed consecutively.

Finally, Toronto's diversity directly contributes to the open-mindedness its inhabitants have towards music. Compared to Lindsay residents, Torontonians tend to be more open to embracing what is considered strange or alternative, and it's just because the population is so big and non-homogenous that everyone can find their own place. In contrast, Lindsay's relatively homogenous population and quickly growing retirement community just doesn't create space for new and different music styles. The annual Fall Fair concert only hosts country artists, since the event coordinators know what sells, which tends to be what I call the "three C's": Canadian, Christian, and Country.

Now, this article is not meant to slam my hometown. Rather, it is meant to bring awareness to the differences between rural and urban Ontario. It was *only* through the music I was surrounded by growing up that I can now appreciate and embrace all the of the wonder that Toronto music is. Because at the end of the day if "Save a Horse Ride a Cowboy" comes on, I'll be right there, dancing along to it.

PARTY MUSIC HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MOST PROGRESSIVE PART OF HIP-HOP

BY KESHAV SHARMA-JAITLY

© Jay-Z by Mikael 'Mika' Väisänen, Kendrick Lamar by Andrew Lih, licensed under CC BY 2.0, edits by Daniel Lewycky

Hip-hop was officially born on August 11, 1973, at a "Back To School Jam" in the Bronx, hosted by a then 18 year-old DJ Kool Herc. As the Bronx burned around them, a small group of kids in a rec room bore witness to a watershed moment in music history. The initial music was minimalistic, flashy, and humorous – it was party music, the sound of youth, rebellion, joy and defiant self-expression. Over time, hip-hop morphed into the deeply political, complex genre that it is today but straight-forward party music has remained at hip-hop's core. If anything, it's what has helped the genre stay ahead of the curve while the rest of the music world has been playing catch-up. To demonstrate this, I've put together a list of some of the most progressive, genre-defining party bops in hip-hop's history, from the genre's formative years to its current place as the nucleus of popular music.

SUGARHILL GANG - "RAPPER'S DELIGHT" (1979)

The Sugarhill Gang's iconic debut was hip-hop's first step into recorded territory. A lyrically uncomplicated, party-ready banger, it was a catchy, fun earworm. The politics of the music were found in its commercial success and distribution rather than it's lyrics, and the song provided a starting point for hip-hop as a recorded medium.

RUN-DMC - "WALK THIS WAY" (1986)

It required a little persuasion, but record producer Rick Rubin finally got a disgruntled Run-DMC to record a hip-hop version of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way" without changing a word from the original. With an official Aerosmith feature and a rock sound familiar to white audiences, "Walk this Way" quickly became one of the 1980s most iconic hits. They became the first hip-hop group on the cover of Rolling Stone, and the first hip-hop group to make an appearance on Dick Clark's American Bandstand, opening up avenues for opportunity and inspiring a generation.

2 LIVE CREW – "ME SO HORNY" (1989)

Florida collective 2 Live Crew gained infamy with the release of singles "Throw that D" and "Me So Horny," sexually charged reflections of Miami's party culture. The flashy lyrics of these songs led to obscenity charges that made it to a federal court, with a jury eventually declaring that music is protected under the First Amendment, no matter how crude. Had 2 Live Crew had lost their case, obscenity laws could have silenced so much of the hip-hop music that followed.

MC HAMMER - "CAN'T TOUCH THIS" (1990)

MC Hammer grew up watching The Black Panthers' unofficial dance group rehearse, and his background as a dancer took precedence over his skill as a rapper in his performances. His music was pure escapism and the formula proved successful, not just with black and Latino communities struggling under the weight of the Reagan-Bush era, but with white audiences as well. Hammer's second album was the best selling hip-hop record of its time, and helped further cement the genre as the sound of the future.

LAURYN HILL - "DOO WOP (THAT THING)" (1998)

Ms. Hill's signature hit isn't without a message, but it's still an undeniable party starter. The Grammy-winning "Doo Wop" was the first (!) number one hit by a solo female rapper, an achievement that stood as hers alone until Cardi B's "Bodak Yellow" topped the charts nearly 20 years later. From the iconic piano chords to the head-nodding drums, this one slaps, plain and simple.

It's not about having perfect lyrics or perfect flow – it's about vibe, energy, and clout.

SOULJA BOY - "CRANK THAT (SOULJA BOY)" (2007)

"Crank That" was massive. We've all downloaded it on Limewire, and we've all searched Urban Dictionary to find out what it actually means to "superman a ho." But the song's biggest impact didn't come from its sound – it was came from Soulja Boy's ingenious use of internet marketing. With its inescapable dance and its unforgettable video, "Crank That" subverted the music industry's outdated promo techniques and birthed viral music marketing. It's 2019, and we're all still living in the world that "Crank That" built. Did somebody say DRAAAAKE?

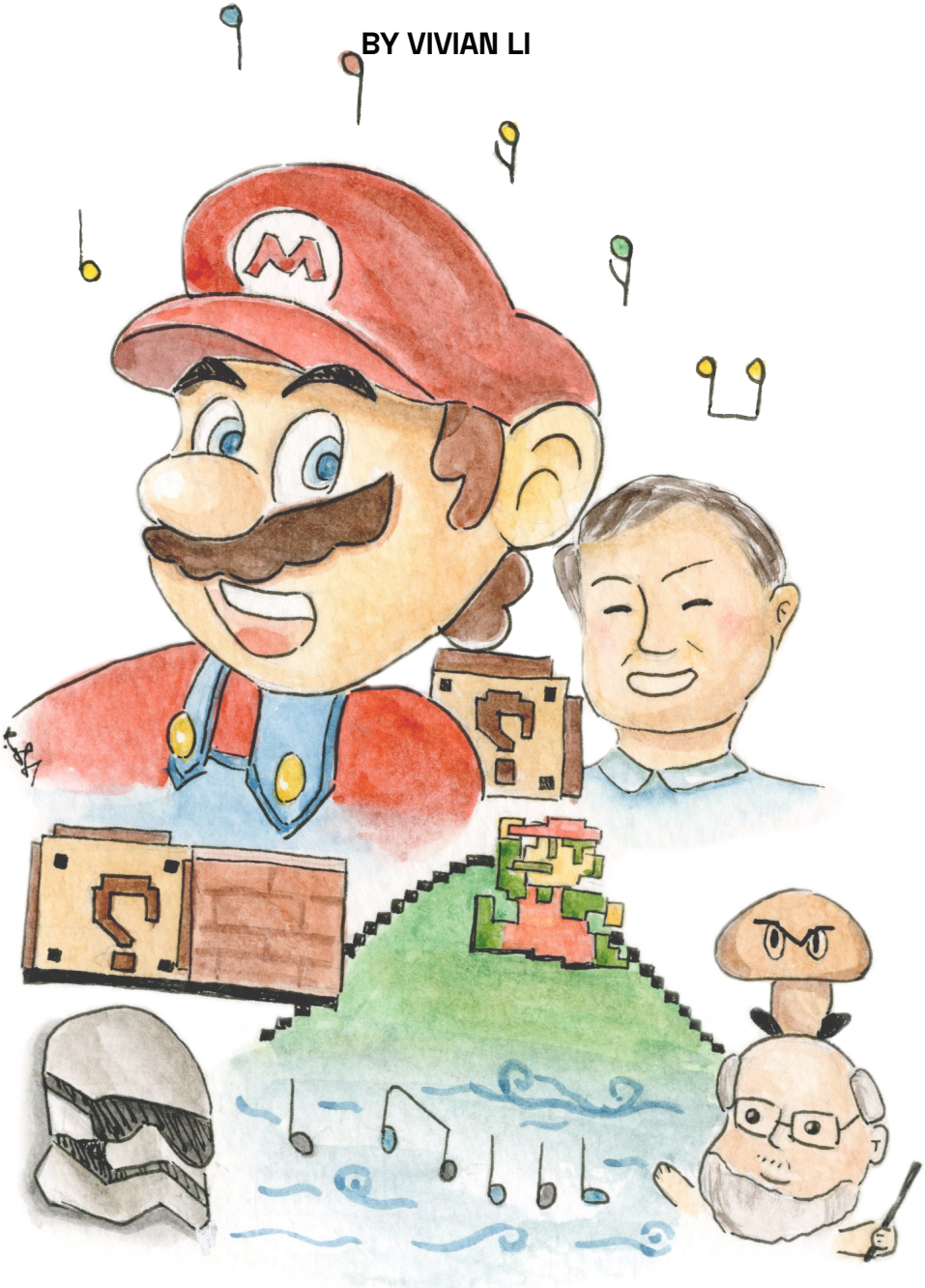
LIL YATCHY - "BROCCOLI" (2016)

"Broccoli" was D.R.A.M's song on-paper, but we all know it actually belonged to Lil Yachty. Within the span of a few short bars, the red-haired rapper brags about his jewels, asks a woman to be his "sunshine" and somehow manages to reference Columbine without killing the mood. In doing so, he helped bring SoundCloud rap into the mainstream for the first time. It's not about having perfect lyrics or perfect flow – it's about vibe, energy and clout. The SoundCloud generation is just trying to have fun.

VIDEO GAME COMPOSERS:

THE UNSUNG HEROES

BY VIVIAN LI



© Illustration by Sherry Liu

If we all know and revere John Williams as a musical giant, then why haven't most of us heard of Koji Kondo, who composed the *Super Mario Bros.* soundtrack? *The Super Mario Bros.* theme is just as iconic as "The Imperial March," so it seems strange that most of us have never learned the name of it's composer. Some might argue that Kondo's lack of recognition is because he isn't from the West, however, North American video game composers such as Neal Acree are just as overlooked. Given this massive discrepancy in acclaim, it's important to examine the differences between composing for film and composing for video games. By exploring Koji Kondo's career and looking at his creative processes, this article will attempt to uncover why it is that those who score video games are forgotten, while those who score films are remembered.

Kondo was raised in Nagoya, and his journey into music began in kindergarten, when he learned how to play the electone organ. Some years later, he attended the Osaka School of Arts for his postsecondary education, but never focused on music specifically – he studied Art Planning. He grew interested in sound design and engineering, and eventually applied to Nintendo in his senior year after his friend told him about a recruitment ad. Working at Nintendo gave him space to grow and develop his signature, effect-heavy style. For example, he created melodies using square waves in the Famicon – an 8-bit video game console made by Nintendo, known in Japan as the "Family Computer" – which resulted in his synthetic melodies having an open and wide sound to them.

WHEN DONE RIGHT, THE MUSIC WILL QUIETLY COMPLEMENT GAMEPLAY WITHOUT DOMINATING PLAYERS' ATTENTION.

When composing for video games such as *Super Mario Bros.* and *Zelda*, Kondo was inspired by the game's atmosphere and images of grassland, as well as the feeling of rushing through open spaces. Kondo attempted to create music with "maximum expression [using] a minimal amount of sounds," by employing punctuated and short bass notes instead of more legato and smooth connections. Kondo stressed that the music for video games needs to fit themes in the game. For example, Kondo specifies that in a creepy scene like an underground cave, in order to evoke an uneasy feeling, soft, quiet notes should be played for a while, leading up to louder and more ominous tunes. When done right, the music will quietly complement gameplay without dominating players' attention.

This differs greatly from a film score, where film audiences listen more passively. As a result, film composers have far more artistic freedom, since their audiences are simply watching the film rather than actively participating in its storyline. In this case, having an adaptable soundtrack would be less of a concern. However, if a video game composer wants to create a similarly dark mood in a game, they would also have to keep in mind the changes that might take place in the scene.

As a result, video game composers do not have to prioritize writing music that can stand individually as a piece. Rather, they simply use their scores to establish the setting of a game. This might contribute to why names like John Williams and Hans Zimmer are instantly recognizable, whereas Koji Kondo is practically unheard of. In conclusion, I believe that the contributions made by video game composers are just as valuable as those made by film composers, and I would encourage listeners to learn more about the tunes behind their favourite games.

how i fell out of love with indie

SPOILER: THERE'S ONLY SO MANY WAYS TO HEAR WHITE MEN BE SAD

DANI MARIAM

Indie was the soundtrack to my adolescence. To my eighth-grade self, Vampire Weekend's *Contra* was a fool-proof solution to seasonal depression. The bright and sunny xylophones, combined with violins and electronic African-inspired beats were unlike anything I had ever heard at the time. I was sold. From then on, I lived and breathed indie, and my iPod quickly filled up with everything from the Arctic Monkeys to Sufjan Stevens.

However, while *Contra* will always have a place in my heart, I've grown to realize that it is somewhat problematic, and that its issues plague the indie genre as a whole. Every review of Contra cites Paul Simon's *Graceland* as the album's primary influence, and a number even call Simon the "father" of Afro-fusion music. The band members themselves have talked about how their influences are rooted in native Congolese music, but the problem remains that many continue to credit African tribal influences to Paul Simon, who is a white man, while real African artists are overlooked within the sphere of music journalism.

The current political state of the world has made me hyper-aware of my place in society as a woman of colour, and I'm realizing that music made by bearded, underfed white boys just doesn't resonate with me anymore. I find it's growing harder for me to enjoy songs that don't bring interesting or new perspectives to the table, either lyrically or sonically. It seems that indie has become the musical equivalent of an ashy, dry chicken cutlet that's only been seasoned with salt and pepper. There's only so many times I can listen to a melodramatic, whiney song about a girl not liking them back. As a result, I've been becoming increasingly interested in music like rap and R&B, where the voices of people of colour are integral to the history and relevance of these genres. I'm sure that it's not only me who feels this way – whenever I go to smaller indie gigs, it seems that I can count the visible minorities on one hand.

In the past few years, the indie genre has been kept afloat almost entirely by the few female and minority artists working within it. Take Mitski's 2016 single "Your Best American Girl," for example. The track is shaped by her identity as a Japanese-American woman, and she conveys experiences she's had as a woman of colour without candy-coating or them down. She sings: "You're an all-American boy, I guess I couldn't help trying to be your best American girl," referencing

her experiences with romantic relationships and her past attempts to conform to American expectations. Mitski's 2018 album *Be The Cowboy* also topped the year-end lists of many music publications – and for good reason. Her voice is a breath of fresh air that indie desperately needs.

Another of my favourite records of the past year was Blood Orange's *Negro Swan*, which deals heavily with concepts of black identity. At the end of the track "Dagenham Dream," black transgender activist Janet Mock delivers a monologue in which she talks about being "hyper-conscious and aware of not going into spaces and seeking too much attention," and how "in order to belong, [people like her] have to shrink parts of [themselves]". This verse is relatable to anyone who feels like an outsider, but more importantly, it highlights real social issues faced by the transgender community. It's clear why a piece like this is much more substantial than another whining indie guy coming from a place of privilege.

"IT SEEMS THAT INDIE HAS BECOME LIKE THE MUSICAL EQUIVALENT OF AN ASHY, DRY CHICKEN CUTLET THAT'S ONLY BEEN SEASONED WITH SALT AND PEPPER."

I am not saying that white people shouldn't make indie music, nor am I saying that I have entirely cut out the music they create. However, for a long time, I wasn't able to relate to most of the music I was listening to. The unique perspectives that artists of colour offer echo many of the experiences I have had as a woman of colour, and as a result, have helped me feel a bit more comfortable in my own skin. And at the end of the day, there's something truly remarkable about feeling like you're understood. In my opinion, whether or not you are a person of colour, going out of your way to listen artists coming from differing backgrounds will allow you not only to appreciate a variety of music styles, but will offer an alternative perspective coming from voices that deserves to be heard.

© Ezra Koenig Photo by Moses Namkung / © Dev Hynes Photo by Mamadi Doumbouya for The New York Times / © Mitski Photo by Bao Ngo / © Paul Simon Photo by Fred Arellano

THE SIX UNAVOIDABLE PEOPLE YOU'LL MEET AT EVERY TORONTO SHOW

©Illustration by Kiki Teng

BY MENA FOUDA

Toronto has an enjoyable live music scene, but let's face it: the venues and the people can be… special. The smell of strangers' kush cologne and other worse odours engulfs you. Your shoes stick to the Molson-soaked floors. Your wallet ends up completely devoid of money after forking over all your coins at coat check.

But all of those fun little experiences have got nothing on the absolute joy you must experience if you encounter *them*. By them, I mean one of the six unavoidable people you'll meet in Toronto's live scene. These folks help to enrich your experience. They make that night one that is impossible to forget. If you are one of these six, I must say: thank you, brave souls. Without you, concerts in Toronto just wouldn't be as special.

Livestreaming Lily

Livestreaming Lily is the courageous human who goes to a show and proceeds to livestream the entire show to all of their two followers. Thank you, Livestreaming Lily! Due to your selfless actions, and because you are standing right in front of me, I now have the privilege of watching the entire concert through your phone screen. I am astounded at your upper arm strength for holding your phone up for the entire show. Work those healthy triceps. It's so cute that you think people will actually watch your live stream, instead of it being a complete waste of your time!

Indie Ian

"Yo, I bet these girls only know the newest album, bro. I liked [insert band name here] before they got super famous, bro. I know all the deep cuts, bro." Thank you, Indie Ian, for reminding us that we are all inferior when it comes to your music taste. It is soooo impressive that you came out of the womb liking Arctic Monkey's debut album, and not just AM. You are soooo dashing, with your ability to quote Pitchfork reviews. OMG, you like Radiohead? You are soooo unique.

Cuddling Cassandra-and-Chloe

Don't we all love couples? Don't we all love when couples spend an entire gig making out in front of you? You *thought* you were seeing a band tonight, but instead, you get a front seat to a not-so-exclusive, way-too-public display of affection! Thank you, ladies, for making us remember that aside from you, we all have tragic love lives. It's slightly weird that Death Cab for Cutie is currently playing a breakup song, while you're here happily making out, but you do you!

Musician Martin

Everyone, did you know that located in the crowd tonight, there is a budding local musician with minimal guitar skills? Well, look no further: Musician Martin is here to show off his vast knowledge by leaning into your ears to tell you exactly what kind of bass guitar is being used onstage. Later, he'll tell you that you *have* to check out his Bandcamp account. Unsurprisingly, his music sounds like a dollar-bin version of old Mac DeMarco.

Soundcloud Sebastian

Soundcloud Sebastian is exactly like Musician Martin, except he makes trap music and he's only at the show to "link and build." He spends all day making beats in FL Studio, and films the beats that he creates on his basic music production software in his Snapchat stories. Obviously, Soundcloud Sebastian will caption his videos with four to seven fire emojis, just in case it wasn't obvious how talented he is.

Hipster Harry

This lovely lad stands in the middle of the crowd, with his messy man bun and his IPA. He does not sway to the music. He does not show his enthusiasm. He must maintain a façade of cool. After the show, he'll exclaim to his friends (in a maintained, pretentious tone): "That was a wild show that Alt-J put on." But you cannot fool us, Hipster Harry. We know your vintage Hawaiian shirt and denim jacket would crinkle if you even *thought* of dancing at that concert.

Once again, I thank you if you are one of these unique people. You really add to a concert-goer's experience. My optometrist tells me that due to the amount of times I roll my eyes when I see you, my eye muscles are in great shape.

what are you listening to?

This year, we asked the masthead of *Shift*, UofT's architecture magazine, what they were listening to.

By Anna Trikas | Illustration by Chuyi Deng

DISHA PUNN, 3RD YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

Spanish House Music & mellow sounding songs.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

"Solo de Mi," by Bad bunny.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

Classic rock.

EMILY LAWRASON, 3RD YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

Electronic, & experimental rap.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

Milo, Against all Logic, & Archie Marshall.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

I'm going to Amsterdam soon, so more of that kind of music.

TAREK MOKHALALATI, 3RD YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

90's and early hip-hop: a mixture of street hip-hop and early 90's instrumental hip-hop.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

Post Malone, as well as Rage Against the Machine, Metallica, and ACDC. Also, vapourwave.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

I like looking at music that takes a song from the past and modernizes/remixes it. For example, Mos Def.

SUSEL NARANJO, 3RD YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

Spanish ballads and mellow music.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

Sin Banderas, Sebastian Yatra and Silvio Rodriguez.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

I want to get into more Spanish music, and more electronic music.

SARAH GARLAND, 3RD YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

RnB, Indie pop, and pop.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

Random artists from spotify, Khalid, and Elley Duhé.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

Indie rock.

RIA PERRAULT, 4TH YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

Alternative, rap, and jazz.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

In terms of songs, I've been listening to "Mumble Rap" by Belly and "Giant Steps" by John Coltrane.
In general, I've been listening to a lot of Charles Mingus, the Smiths, and Earl Sweatshirt's new album.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

Jazz.

EDDY O'TOOLE, 4TH YEAR ARCHITECTURE

What kind of music are you really into right now?

A mix of English and French 80's alt-pop. And Patsy Cline.

What's a song/some artists that you have you listened to a lot lately?

"Souvenir" by OMD, "Don't Tell me" by BlancMange, and "Human" by The Humans.

What's a type of music you want to find more about/start listening to more?

Musicians from Quebec.
I've really enjoyed 80's artist Michel Rivard lately.

HartHouse